

## SENATE AGRICULTURE

Exhibit No. 1

Date 2 / 5 / 15

Bill No. SB 210



### Board of Directors

Marc Bekoff, Ph.D.  
H. Webb Blessley  
Patricio Robles Gil  
Jane Goodall, Ph.D., DBE  
Rick Hopkins, Ph.D.  
Robert W. Koons  
Cara Blessley Lowe  
Thomas D. Mangelsen, Ph.D.  
Corinne R. Rutledge  
John E. Swallow

February 5, 2015

Dear Senator Brown and Members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee:

Greetings! Thank you for the opportunity to request your support for SB 210.

The Cougar Fund is a national organization dedicated to education about and protection of mountain lions and other large carnivores. Central to our mission is the recognition of ways to protect people, pets, livestock AND large carnivores in the wake of sustained human encroachment and habitat fragmentation. One of the ways in which we have increased awareness for the possibility of conflict prevention rather than conflict reaction has been to reach out to producers who are already practicing 'predator friendly' husbandry. We were enormously encouraged to find that Montana producers are already leading the way! Not only is Montana home to the exemplary Blackfoot Challenge<sup>i</sup>, but we also know of at least six independent producers<sup>ii</sup> who are trying to live in harmony with the natural world rather than to be forever at odds with it.

Montana is fortunate to have all three iconic large carnivores: grizzly bears, wolves and the elusive mountain lion. These apex predators enhance the biodiversity of the landscape, and they help to maintain the ecological integrity of native flora and fauna. Large carnivores are also a source of great revenue from visitors who choose Montana as a destination for unmatched wildlife viewing. They are good for Montana!

The funding bill currently in process, HB 145, is an excellent proposition for assisting those citizens who may have suffered losses from large carnivores. It will provide an equal amount of funding for the Livestock Loss Mitigation Board to assist growers with the provision of non-lethal deterrents as well as the general operating costs of the board and the option for the costs of permanent removal of predators, if all else fails.

Of the six producers that I referenced earlier, five of them have successfully reduced losses of smaller livestock such as sheep, goats and alpacas with the use of the non-lethal deterrents that HB 145 will help to fund. This is significant because these smaller mammals can be targets for depredation by mountain lions. The success of these growers indicates how valid and practical it would be for you to include mountain lions in your livestock loss program.

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Financial help would then be available for conflict prevention techniques that already have a great track record in deterring mountain lions from small livestock. The sixth predator friendly producer concentrates on cattle on rangeland and has been extremely successful in deterring grizzly bear and wolf depredations.

Please extend our gratitude to Senator Vucovitch, District 39, for sponsoring this bill. We have always enjoyed very positive and productive communication with the staff of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and we are very encouraged by Montana's efforts to identify issues and explore non-lethal solutions. Safe passage of SB 210 and the complementary passage of funding in the House will give all agriculturalists the chance to follow in the footsteps of the conflict prevention pioneers cited in this letter.

*The Cougar Fund respectfully asks for your unanimous support of SB 210.*

Sincerely,



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<sup>i</sup> [www.blackfootchallenge.org](http://www.blackfootchallenge.org)

<sup>ii</sup> Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool Company (Belgrade), Willow Spring Ranch (Belgrade), Montana Highland Lamb (Whitehall), Alpacas of Montana (Bozeman), Happy Hollow Farm (Marion), and The Rodear Initiative (Bozeman).